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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

REVIEW OF PROBABLE SOVIET COURSES OF ACTION WITH RESPECT TO GERMANY DURING 1952, IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT SOVIET MOVES



NIE-53/1

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The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Joint Staff participated with the Central Intelligence Agency in the preparation of this estimate. All members of the Intelligence Advisory Committee concurred in this estimate on 24 April 1952. See, however, footnote of Director of Intelligence, USAF, to paragraph 7.

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ESTIMATE

1. The recent Soviet notes on Germany are frequently cited as indicative of a possible shift in Soviet policy toward Germany. In the first of these notes, the Kremlin proposed that the Big Four discuss "without delay" the question of a peace treaty and conditions for German unification. The second note reiterated the views expressed in the first, and acknowledged the necessity for Four-Power discussion of "the question of conducting free all-German elections," without, however, committing the USSR to any definite course of action.

2. If the Kremlin is actually prepared to permit free elections in East Germany and to permit the establishment of a free all-German Government, these steps would represent a significant shift in Soviet policy toward Germany.

3. While such a shift is always a possibility, the Soviet notes on Germany are not in themselves evidence of a change in Soviet policy toward Germany. The only new elements in the notes are: (1) a proposal that a "unified, democratic, peace-loving Germany" be permitted to rearm, and (2) a proposal that amnesty be granted all former members of the German Army and all ex-Nazis not convicted as war criminals. Neither of these new propositions in itself indicates a Kremlin intention to modify its policy of retaining Communist control of East Germany while attempting to undermine the Western position in West Germany. Rather they seem designed only to further the latter objective through appealing to the national sentiments of the West Germans. The second note contained a suggestion that a check "could" be made of conditions for free

all-German elections by a commission formed by the four occupying powers. At the same time, the notes reiterate the essentials of Soviet German policy as laid down in the Prague declaration of October 1950.

4. The content of the Soviet notes, as well as general Communist activity relative to Germany, makes it appear probable that the Soviet objective in delivering the notes is to play upon the nationalism of the West Germans, to retard West German integration into the Western defense system, to divide the Western Powers, and, in general, to obstruct implementation of Western defense plans.

5. The Kremlin probably estimates that if the Western Powers agree to Four-Power discussions on free all-German elections, the conclusion of the EDC and contractual agreements would be automatically delayed, and that, as a result, the whole Western defense program might be delayed, or crippled. On the other hand, the Kremlin probably estimates that if the Western Powers reject a Four-Power conference to discuss terms for free all-German elections, public sentiment in West Germany, Britain, and France might turn so strongly against the EDC and contractual agreements that the governments of these countries would refuse to sign the agreements, or that the agreements would not be ratified.

6. The Kremlin almost certainly estimates, therefore, that its proposals for German unity come at the time when they can do the most harm to the Western defense effort and to Western unity. Moreover, the proposals commit the USSR to nothing more than talk, and

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the Kremlin has never been averse to protracted discussion.

7. We believe, therefore, that the estimate in NIE-53, "Probable Soviet Courses of Action with Respect to Germany during 1952," (19 February 1952), remains firm:

"In order to delay West German integration with the West and West German rearmament, the Kremlin might attempt negotiations on free elections throughout Germany, but only to gain time. The Kremlin almost certainly believes that free elections would result in a repudiation of Communism in East Germany. Moreover, the Kremlin would not be satisfied that a united Germany which was not under Soviet control could be kept neutral, or that Germany, once free, would not eventually rearm and turn against the USSR. We believe, therefore, that the Kremlin is unlikely actually to permit free elections to take place, even if the Kremlin were convinced that by this

means it could block West German integration with the West and West German rearmament. As a tactical manoeuvre, the Kremlin might remove some of its more overt control mechanisms, including some of its military forces. We do not believe, however, that the Kremlin would so relax its control over East Germany as to affect the foundations of Soviet authority."*

* It is the view of the Director of Intelligence, USAF, that the recent Soviet notes when considered in the light of other late Soviet moves, suggest an alternative course of action which the Kremlin might follow in the event that it anticipates failure in preventing West German rearmament and integration with the West by other means. Thus the possibility should not be precluded that the Kremlin may be prepared to make real concessions, such as the withdrawal of Soviet forces from East Germany, should the Western powers agree to the Kremlin proposal for Four-Power meetings on the German problem, including the suggested discussion of the holding of all-German elections.

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